



Lesson Plan

Behind Our Walls

Created: 05/2026 by the National FFA Organization

Description of Lesson: *In her retiring address, 2024-2025 National FFA Western Region Vice President Abigale Jacobsen shares her personal experiences with building emotional “walls” and how they can limit connection with others.*

Student Learning Objectives:

After completing these activities, students will ...

1. Identify what “walls” are and how they impact relationships.
2. Reflect on personal barriers that may limit connection with others.
3. Develop strategies to improve communication and build stronger relationships.

Suggested Grade Level:

Grades 9 and 10 (This lesson is written so instructors can scale up or down based on class needs.)

Suggested Time: 60 minutes (*Time requirements may vary based upon student understanding and class schedule.)

Resources/References: Video: “Vulnerability and Connection,” <https://vimeo.com/1132760984?fl=pl&fe=cm>

Related Resources:

1. Retiring Addresses and Keynote Speeches, <https://www.ffa.org/proceedings/2025-proceedings/>
2. Keynote-Retiring Address Lessons, <https://ffa.app.box.com/folder/375371522202?s=v5eqwmltx9xuqgdi7zimqnt3zaec609l>
3. FFA Value Lesson Series, <https://ffa.box.com/s/u9qnfyvape9sy3d3xc85hlqxdxghq3dq>

Equipment and Supplies Needed:

1. A copy of the “Behind Our Walls” worksheet for each student
2. A copy of “Appendix 1: Tearing Down Walls” handout.
3. Internet access to play the video in real time or embed it in a PowerPoint ahead of time

Vocabulary:

1. Barrier
2. Vulnerability

Cross-Curricular Connections:

English/Language Arts

Write a personal reflection.

SAE and FFA Connections

Name: _____

1. Agricultural Communications and Education SAE Idea Cards, FFA
<https://ffa.app.box.com/file/301231972163?s=x7e4v2qzxcwkleugkun3mt0421m5nejx>.
2. Extemporaneous Public Speaking LDE, [FFA.org/participate/ides/extemporaneous-public-speaking/](https://ffa.org/participate/ides/extemporaneous-public-speaking/)
3. Prepared Public Speaking LDE, [FFA.org/participate/prepared-public-speaking/](https://ffa.org/participate/prepared-public-speaking/)

Student Activity Sheets:

Direct access to student activity sheets without lesson plan or answer key for easy upload to a learning management system or printing for classwork.

<https://ffa.app.box.com/file/2249037700799> (Word)

<https://ffa.app.box.com/file/2249040440771> (Word Non-Designed)

<https://ffa.app.box.com/file/2249036264963> (PDF)

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1jCJ_sfp5Fv6DDIj5jeHbl3JmNT7vHqMf/copy (Google)

These Activities Are Aligned to the Following Standards:

FFA Precept

- FFA.PL-A.Action A1. Work independently and in groups to get things done.
- FFA.PL-A.Action A3. Plan effectively.
- FFA.PL-A.Action A4. Identify and use resources.
- FFA.PL-A.Action A5. Communicate effectively with others.
- FFA.PL-A.Action A8. Evaluate and reflect on actions taken and make appropriate modifications.
- FFA.PL-B.Relationships B1. Practice human relations skills including compassion, empathy, unselfishness, trustworthiness, reliability and listening.
- FFA.PL-B.Relationships B2. Interact and work with others.
- FFA.PL-B.Relationships B5. Participate effectively as a team member.
- FFA.PL-C.Vision C1. Contemplate the future.
- FFA.PL-C.Vision C2. Conceptualize ideas.
- FFA.PL-C.Vision C4. Adapt to opportunities and obstacles.
- FFA.PL-D.Character D1. Live with integrity.
- FFA.PL-D.Character D4. Respect others.
- FFA.PL-D.Character D6. Value service to others.
- FFA.PG-K.Emotional Growth K2. Live a compassionate and selfless life.

Common Core – Writing

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Common Core – Speaking and Listening

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.4 Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.6 Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

AFNR Career Ready Practices

- CRP.04. Communicate clearly, effectively, and with reason. Career-ready individuals communicate thoughts, ideas and action plans with clarity, whether using written, verbal and/or visual methods.

Partnership for 21st Century Skills

- Collaboration
- Communication
- Initiative and Self-direction
- Productivity and Accountability
- Think Creativity

Name: _____

Lesson Plan:

1. **Bell Ringer:** Think about a time when you didn't share your thoughts or feelings with someone. What stopped you from opening up, and how did that affect the situation?
2. **Introduction:** Each student needs a copy of the "Behind Our Walls" worksheet. *Today, we are going to watch a retiring address from the 98th National FFA Convention & Expo. This retiring address was given by 2024-25 National FFA Western Region Vice President. In her speech, she shares her story about putting up walls. Sometimes people build walls to protect themselves, but those walls can limit relationships and leadership potential. We will explore how breaking down those walls can lead to stronger connections. As we are watching the video, look over the questions on the worksheet "Behind Our Walls" and be ready to record the answers.*
3. **Activity:** Each student needs a copy of the worksheet "Behind Our Walls".
 - a. **Part 1:** Have students watch the retiring address of the 2024-25 National FFA Western Region Vice President Abigale Jacobsen. The video is available at <https://vimeo.com/1132760984?fl=pl&fe=cm>. While students watch the video, have them answer the questions on their student worksheet.
 - b. **Part 2:** Divide students into small groups. Assign each group one of the following scenarios from "Appendix 1: Tearing Down Walls" handout.
 1. A student is struggling with their SAE but won't ask for help.
 2. A new FFA member doesn't talk during meetings.
 3. A team member avoids responsibility during a group project.
 4. A student disagrees with a leader but stays silent.

Each group should answer the following questions and share with the class:

1. What "wall" might this person have?
 2. How is it affecting others?
 3. What is one way to break down that wall?
- c. **Part 3:** Prepare students to participate in an interactive activity like the activity conducted by Abigale during her retiring address. Share that the activity is about building understanding, empathy and connection and not judgment. Explain that you will ask the students to stand and step forward if they agree with your statement. Share the following rules and information about the activity:
 1. Respect silence
 2. No talking, laughing or commenting while the activity is happening.
 3. Participation is optional.
 4. Step forward only if you feel comfortable. You are never required to share.
 5. Confidentiality is expected.
 6. This is a no judgment zone. Show no reaction to others' choices (facial expressions, comments, etc.)
 7. Respect personal space.
 8. After each statement, step back into place.
 9. This activity is designed for you to be honest with yourself and for your own reflection.

Select from the following statements:

1. Step forward if you enjoy being outdoors.
2. Step forward if you like animals.
3. Step forward if you've ever been part of FFA or want to be.
4. Step forward if you've ever tried something new and were nervous.
5. Step forward if you've ever felt stressed about school.
6. Step forward if you've ever been afraid to speak up.
7. Step forward if you've ever worried about what others think of you.
8. Step forward if you've ever avoided asking for help.
9. Step forward if you've ever put on a "mask" to hide how you feel.
10. Step forward if you've ever struggled silently.
11. Step forward if you've ever wished someone understood you better.

Name: _____

12. *Step forward if there is something about you that you're afraid others wouldn't understand.*

Have students take their seats and use the following questions to debrief:

1. *What did you notice during the activity?*
2. *Were you surprised by how many people stepped forward at similar times?*
3. *How does this connect to the ideas of "walls"?*
4. *How do these walls affect our relationships with friends, family or in FFA?*

*An alternative to this activity is to have the students remain seated and to respond privately by writing yes or no to the statements.

4. **Follow-up:** *These activities show us that we are not as different as we think. When we take small risks to be more open, we can create stronger relationships. Breaking down walls doesn't happen all at once, but it starts with small steps.*
5. **Optional – Extended Learning Opportunities (Not factored into time requirement):**
 - a. This should take 15 minutes. Provide students with two notecards or sticky notes. Ask students to write one "wall" they sometimes put up. Examples include fear of speaking, not asking for help, hiding feelings and worrying about judgment. Students should post their "brick" (notecard or sticky note) on a classroom wall/board, creating a wall. Title this wall "Walls We're Breaking Down." After all notes are posted, discuss some of the examples listed on the wall. Then have students use the remaining notecard/sticky note to write a small action they can take to break down their "wall." Examples include asking one question in class, talking to a teammate, being honest with a friend or participating in FFA. Encourage realistic, simple steps. Students can either post their notes on top of their original brick or keep it as a reminder of a personal goal.
6. **Exit Ticket:** What is one "wall" that can prevent people from building strong relationships, and how can it be broken down?

Name: _____

Behind Our Walls

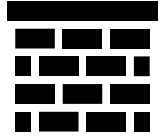
Aligned to the following standards:

FFA.PL-A1; FFA.PL-A3; FFA.PL-A4; FFA.PL-A5; FFA.PL-A8; FFA.PL-B1; FFA.PL-B2; FFA.PL-B5;
FFA.PL-C1; FFA.PL-C2; FFA.PL-C4; FFA.PL-D1; FFA.PL-D4; FFA.PL-D6; FFA.PG-K2;
CCSS.ELA-W.9-10.4; CCSS.SL.9-10.6; CRP.04

Part 1

Directions: Answer the following questions while watching the retiring address of 2024-2025 National FFA Western Region Vice President Abigale Jacobsen. The video is available at <https://vimeo.com/1132760984?fl=pl&fe=cm>.

1. What does Abigale first build a wall with?
2. Why do we put up walls?
3. Name an example of how people can put up walls.
4. "If all we show people is our wall, we will never know what it feels like to be _____ for all that we are."
5. Which FFA alumni leadership camp did Abigale attend?
6. What are two activities Abigale participated in at camp?
7. What did the campers risk when stepping forward?
8. Complete this statement: "Being real feels _____."
9. What does emotional risk look like?
10. Complete this statement: "Connection over _____."
11. What is one "wall" you put up and one small step you could take to break it down?



Name: _____

KEY: Behind Our Walls

Aligned to the following standards:

FFA.PL-A1;FFA.PL-A3;FFA.PL-A4;FFA.PL-A5;FFA.PL-A8;FFA.PL-B1; FFA.PL-B2;FFA.PL-B5;FFA.PL- C1;FFA.PL-C2;FFA.PL.C4;FFA.PL-D1;FFA.PL-D4;FFA.PL-D6;FFA.PG-K2;CCSS.ELA-W.9-10.4; CCSS.SL.9-10.6;CRP.04

Part 1

Directions: Answer the following questions while watching the retiring address of 2024-2025 National FFA Western Region Vice President Abigale Jacobsen. The video is available at <https://vimeo.com/1132760984?fl=pl&fe=cm>.

1. What does Abigale first build a wall with?

Stuffed animals.

2. Why do we put up walls?

To protect ourselves.

3. Name an example of how people can put up walls.

Answers will vary.

4. "If all we show people is our wall, we will never know what it feels like to be loved_____ for all that we are.

5. Which FFA alumni leadership camp did Abigale attend?

Camp Tulakogee, Oklahoma.

6. What are two activities Abigale participated in at camp?

Answers will vary but could include dodgeball, water Olympics, ropes course or goal setting.

7. What did the campers risk when stepping forward?

Being vulnerable.

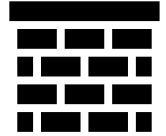
8. Complete this statement: "Being real feels dangerous_____."

9. What does emotional risk look like?

Answers will vary.

10. Complete this statement: "Connection over protection_____."

11. What is one "wall" you put up and one small step you could take to break it down?



Name: _____

Appendix 1: Tearing Down Walls

1. A student is struggling with their SAE but won't ask for help

What “wall” might this person have?

How is it affecting others?

What is one way to break down that wall?

2. A new FFA member doesn't talk during meetings

What “wall” might this person have?

How is it affecting others?

What is one way to break down that wall?

Name: _____

3. A team member avoids responsibility during a group project

What “wall” might this person have?

How is it affecting others?

What is one way to break down that wall?

4. A student disagrees with a leader but stays silent

What “wall” might this person have?

How is it affecting others?

What is one way to break down that wall?